

Aikido of Phoenix Newsletter *May 2010*

FROM TERESA MASTISON SENSEI

“As soon as you concern yourself with the “good” and “bad” of your fellows, you create an opening in your heart for maliciousness to enter. Testing, competing with, and criticizing others weaken and defeat you.”

- O’Sensei, The Art of Peace

Your training in Aikido really is a very personal endeavor. There are a lot of tangible and practical benefits to training, but other benefits are not seen or felt for years. It is only through consistent and diligent training that one will reap the benefits of following the way of Aikido. Aikido can be a way of life if you so choose. O’Sensei believed that through Aikido we can create peace on Earth. This makes me think of what happens when you drop a pebble in water. You see where the pebble was dropped and then you see concentric circles emanating from that point. It’s like when you make someone’s day by being nice to them. They feel better because of what you did and now they will treat others better, which will encourage them to treat others around them better and so on and so on. Imagine if everyone strove to do this. There would be no room for “maliciousness to enter”.

By it’s very nature Aikido forces one to focus on yourself. Not in a greedy, self-centered way, but in a self-improvement kind of way. This is the principle **masakatsu agatsu** - true victory is victory over yourself. When you concern yourself with your own performance and achievements and not compare them to others you free yourself to making progress that is right for you. When you realize that you can not control anyone but yourself you will stop trying to change those around you. This can be applied on the mat as well as in every day life. Controlling oneself is hard enough at times let alone trying to control others. It’s a hard lesson to learn, but one that is imperative that you do.

On the mat, when you try to force a technique it doesn’t work, but once you refocus on your own movements and quit trying to make it happen the technique flows more easily. This is vital in all aspects of Aikido, whether it’s technique or principle - you have to move and control only yourself.

Good luck in letting go of the urge to try to control others. It’s an ongoing lesson. One with which I hope your Aikido training can help.

FROM JOHN SCANLIN SENSEI

“True wisdom comes from intellectual education, physical education, ethical education, and ki education.” – O’Sensei

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Did you know...

- There are 4613 Aikido dojos in the world representing 115 countries (per Aikiweb-a great Aikido source)
- There are approximately 1.5 million Aikido students worldwide (Aikiweb)
- There are 47 Aikido organizations worldwide (Aikiweb)- Aikiweb also lists 183 Aikido books worldwide
- Aikido is the only martial art allowed in the U.S. federal prison system
- In a 1957 interview, O’Sensei stated that there are more than 3000 Aikido techniques, and each one has 16 variations! (hmmm, got some work to do!).

-Shikko is a traditional way of movement in Aikido (and traditional Japanese civilization) for a couple of reasons: most early Japanese buildings were never very tall because natural resources such as wood were very scarce and costly, so standing up to perform tasks was not an option. Also, during Feudal times, The Samurai would be expected to walk around on their knees in the presence of the feudal lord (daimyo), so that it would be harder to attack the daimyo (thanks, Avi).

Speaking of Aikido books, don’t forget we have a 16 book library at the downtown Chandler dojo. The library is open to all Aikido of Phoenix students. Contact me (e-mail on the AOP website) or come by the Chandler dojo to order a book and I’ll get it to you. See the enclosed list.

Congratulations, Avi and Anu, on the birth of your daughter!

Keep the spirit strong.

Books available:

- Invincible Warrior - John Stevens Shihan - history, philosophy
- Abundant Peace - John Stevens Shihan - O’Sensei biography
- Aikido Basics - Phong Thong Dang Sensei - all aspects of Aikido
- The Essence of Aikido - Bill Sosa Shihan - good beginner’s book
- Aikido of Phoenix Student Guide - Fred Mastison Sensei - all aspects
- Aikido and the Dynamic Sphere - Westbrook/Ratti - textbook style
- Aikido: The Heavenly Road - Kenji Shimizu Shihan - techniques
- The Art of Peace - John Stevens Shihan - sayings of O’Sensei
- The Secrets of Aikido - John Stevens Shihan - different aspects
- The Intuitive Body - Wendy Palmer Sensei - philosophy only
- IAI-The Art of Drawing the Sword - Darrell Craig
- Ultimate Aikido - Yoshimitsu Yamada Shihan - techniques
- Aikido: The Way of Harmony - John Stevens Shihan - history, philosophy, techniques
- Dynamic Aikido - Gozo Shioda Shihan - Yoshinkan style
- Keijutsu Aikido - Thomas H. Makiyama Shihan - basics
- Shiatsu - Gerry Thompson - art of massage

FROM LUCY MAILLOUX SENSEI

Congratulations to our Dojo Cho, Amanda Redington, on a great test and achieving the rank of Sankyu. Testing is an important part of Aikido, not because you get a new belt, but it is a good tool in which you can measure and celebrate your progress. Testing is a long process that begins way before you are on the mat in front of Sensei demonstrating techniques. It is important to know that testing is more than just being able to demonstrate techniques; you must also embody the principles behind the art.

So, what does that mean? Shodo-o-seisu, Masakatsu Agatsu, Dochu-No-Sei..... we have heard these terms and if you have read the student guide or other Aikido materials, you know their basic definitions, but understanding their meaning and applying that knowledge to all that you do is essential. This is where **Do vs. Jitsu** comes into play. Do is the Way or path and Jitsu refers to the combative application of the technique and they both go hand in hand. In Aikido there can be no fighting mind, as evidence in O'Sensei's comment of, "Perhaps I should have entered into the field of philosophy. The spiritual side of me is more emphasized than the physical side." This was a difficult concept for me as a blue, purple and even as a brown belt. My focus was on the combative application, but once I let go of that and focused more on the fundamentals and principles, my Aikido improved. Needless to say, this takes time, an open mind and patience!

Being invited to test is a privilege with responsibilities that should be taken seriously. It is up to you and your selected partner (uke) to practice and prepare. Take the time to ask Sensei or Sempai questions about the process if you are unsure about anything. Realize that no test is perfect, there will be a stumbling point, your brain may completely shut down, but how you react and handle it tells much about where you are at in your training.

As always, remember to train for success, learn to anticipate and overcome obstacles, and failure comes when you do not sincerely dedicate yourself to your commitments and accept that you will not succeed.

RANK PROMOTIONS

Hachikyu (green belt) - Alex Shores, Taylor Shores, Emily Leventhal, Mark McGovern, Matthew McGovern, Drake Hanna

Shichikyu (orange belt) - Ben Bartrim

3rd Stepping Stone - Claudia Rogers

Gokyu (blue belt) - Ceres Perez

Sankyu (2nd purple) - Amanda Redington

KIDS' CORNER

This month I'd like you to consider how Aikido affects your daily life. It's pretty obvious that you are doing Aikido when you are on the mat training. But, are there other times you use Aikido? Do you see other people using Aikido? What about the principles of Aikido? Your challenge this month is to watch for any evidence of you or anyone else doing Aikido. It can be actual techniques or it can be a demonstration of an Aikido principle.

There is so much more to Aikido than techniques. It can be fun and interesting to consciously look for Aikido outside the dojo. Here are some examples of Aikido happening outside the dojo:

- You are watching football and a player drops at the feet of another player to trip him. This is like the technique Tai Otoshi (drop like a rock and the other person tumbles over the top of you).

- You're at recess playing soccer and you trip and begin falling. You turn your fall into a tumble and roll right over your shoulder. This is practicing ukemi.

- You have a dentist appointment and even though you are scared you swallow your fear and you go without complaining. This demonstrates the principle of irimi nage (enter without fear).

Following is a list of some of the most popular Aikido principles that you may be able to realize you or others use:

- Shodo o seisu means to control the first move. This means to always be ready to act.

- Dochu no sei means calmness in action. How do people demonstrate being calm during stressful times?

- Aikido means the way of blending with energy. What are some ways people blend with what's happening around them?

- Irimi nage means to enter without fear. Take control and just do it.

There are so many examples of Aikido outside the dojo, but you have to get used to looking for and seeing them. For the month of May I will be asking you to report on your findings. Let's see how many different ways Aikido can be used in our daily lives. Good luck in your search. I can't wait to hear what you discover.

AoP T-SHIRTS TO ARRIVE MID-MAY

Thank you to everyone who ordered an Aikido of Phoenix t-shirt. The order was placed May 3 and they'll be available at each dojo for pick up towards the end of the second week of May.

TIME FOR A REVIEW: HYDRATION, HYGIENE AND UNIFORMS

The warmer months are upon us which means it's time to review how important it is to keep yourself hydrated. This means you need to drink plenty of water so you can perform at your best. Your body needs to take in at least 8-10 glasses of water every day to avoid becoming dehydrated. When you don't provide the hydration your body needs it begins to tell you by giving you a headache and feeling sluggish. These are typical symptoms of dehydration. Also, when you don't drink enough water you don't go to the bathroom as often and that can lead to infections. The more water you drink the more often you will go to the bathroom and the better your body functions. And it really does have to be WATER that you drink. Sodas, teas, coffee and other drinks have other things in them that don't allow the water to do its thing. Good old plain water is what your body needs. This means you should bring water to class with you as well. If you ever need water during class all you have to do is ask to be excused.

Another issue that is important to review is personal hygiene. **IT'S IMPORTANT TO KEEP YOUR BODY AND UNIFORM CLEAN.** This will help prevent anyone from having a smelly uke. We will all be sweating more so it's more important than ever to remember to come to class with a clean, fresh-smelling body and gi. This includes your feet. Remember to also check the length of your fingernails and toenails. Please keep them trimmed short so they do not scratch others.

During the warmer months, for children especially, it's tempting to not want to wear your uniform. To this I say, you are not required to wear a uniform in our dojos. However, if you have a uniform I ask that you wear it. It shows a commitment and dedication to your training. We've never required students to have uniforms and we never will, but once you decide to wear a uniform we ask that you wear it whenever you are in class. Also, I know it can be hot and uncomfortable with a shirt on underneath your gi top, so if you feel it is necessary to alter your uniform during the hot months then I ask that you try to wear a white shirt and white pants with whatever color belt you currently have. This is not a

CHANDLER DOJO NEWS

Congratulations go out to Avichal Jha and his wife, Anu, on the birth of their new baby girl. Mother and daughter are both fine and healthy. We wish Avi and Anu all the best as they begin their new life as parents. The world is lucky to have such loving people to raise this little girl.

REGISTRATION REMINDER

Just a friendly reminder to all Aikido of Phoenix students. Each city, Chandler and Mesa, requires that every student who participates in classes **MUST** be registered with the city before they get on the mat to train. This means that you need to complete the registration form and pay the city fee **before you participate in class.** They require this for liability issues and we must abide by their policies.

The instructor fee is **NOT** required for participation but we ask that students pay the instructor fee by the 10th of each month. As usual, if there is ever a problem with paying fees in a timely manner just talk to us to make whatever arrangements are necessary.

This represents a major responsibility for students and one we expect all students to take seriously. Please be sure this is taken care of each and every month you train. Thank you.

NEW CITY FEE FAMILY RATE TO START IN JUNE

Beginning June 2010, the city of Chandler will no longer offer a family rate for the city fee, instead each person who registers for Aikido will pay an individual city fee. By making this change the city will align all their classes to reflect the same policy across the board. We are the only class that offers a family rate, which has caused some frustration and confusion. In June, when this change happens, you will finally be able to register for Aikido classes online.

This change will increase the amount families pay the city, but the instructor fees will remain the same. When this change goes into effect, each participant registered for class will pay the city fee for an individual - \$8, \$11, or \$13 per person depending on which dojo and class is attended.

As always, we want to make Aikido available to anyone who truly wants to train. If this change creates a problem we ask that you talk to us and we will figure something out. The City of Chandler also has scholarships available.

MESA DOJO NEWS

There will be **NO CLASSES** in Mesa on Monday, May 31 as the Red Mountain Center will be closed in observation of Memorial Day.

SOUTH CHANDLER DOJO NEWS

There will be **NO CLASSES** on Monday, May 31 for the South Chandler dojo as the facility will be closed in observation of Memorial Day.